



Strategies

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Westin Buckhead, Atlanta, GA • May 16-19, 2011

May 2011

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Letter from the President



Meg Matt

Utility Marketing..... It's come a long way baby

By: Meg Matt, AESP President & CEO

Dedicated to marketing, this month's issue got me thinking... What a difference a decade makes in the way energy companies used to promote energy efficiency (EE) to their customers. Years ago, marketing EE programs often started and stopped with simple bill stuffers. Everyone received the same message with the same call to action at the same time.

Today, the need to develop, implement and sustain energy efficiency programs has emerged as a priority in most regions of the country.

This shift has led to the development of hundreds of new residential, commercial and industrial EE measures and programs. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges we now face is using just the right mix of marketing strategies and tactics to get the results we want from these programs.

The challenge can be daunting because the number and variety of marketing tools we have in our toolboxes has also grown exponentially. Even the way we reach our customers has changed dramatically. Using social media, developing community partnerships, collaborating with retailers, and educating students at all grade levels are just a few examples of how new marketing strategies have changed the way we deliver our energy efficiency messages. We have abandoned the one-size-fits-all marketing policy of yesterday in favor of effective market segmentation. We know the way a 20-something receives, reads and applies energy-saving information is very different from the way a 45-year old interprets and responds to a message. The most successful marketing campaigns employ segmentation and continuously measure and evaluate the program results.

How does your company take advantage of these important trends? Do you have a social media presence? Do you look for ways to partner with organizations that share common goals? Do you segment your markets? Do you have programs within your communities that foster energy efficiency? I encourage you to consider joining AESP's [Marketing Topic Committee](#) and share resources, ideas and successes on a wide variety of issues, trends and challenges. You may also want to register to attend [AESP's Spring Conference: What's New in Marketing & Implementation](#) in Atlanta from May 16 - 19! There will be numerous sessions, case studies and lessons learned discussing the challenges mentioned above. Go to www.aesp.org for more information. We hope to see you there!

Headlines

Upcoming Events

Brown Bags

May 26, 2011

The DOE High Performance Windows Volume Purchase Program: Bringing advanced highly insulating windows & low-E storm windows to the building community

June 23, 2011

Measuring the Impact of Market Transformation
(Description coming soon)

If you would like to organize a Brown Bag, please contact Kisha Gresham at kisha@aesp.org.

AESP Training Courses

May 16, 2011

A Taste of Marketing
(1/2 Day)

May 18-19, 2011

P2 - Level II DSM (1.5 Day)

If you would like to schedule an onsite training please contact Suzanne Jones at (480) 704-5900 or suzanne@aesp.org. For

Stimulus News

"Rebates Helped More Than 2,000 Homeowners Make Energy Saving Repairs"

Industry News

"Energy Improvements"

"Danville Utilities Working on Energy Efficiency Program"

"Facing the Challenges of Demand Response"

"PG&E, SoCal Edison Investing the Most in Demand-Side Management"

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"Puget Sound Energy's Plans Include More Energy Efficiency, Transmission"

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"As More Commercial Buildings Go Green, a Few Go 'Net-Zero'"

"Can Wind and Solar Energy Power Traffic Lights?"

"GE Capital Premier's Mobile Application to Help Restaurants Cut Energy Costs"

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Stimulus News

The following executive summaries of current news items were written for Strategies after being compiled from various news sources.

Rebates Helped More Than 2,000 Homeowners Make Energy Saving Repairs

The Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources and Minnesota Housing reports that nearly 2,200 homeowners benefitted from the Energy Saver Rebate, a rebate for high-efficiency mechanical systems plus insulation and windows that was funded with federal stimulus dollars and administered by the state. The program helped Minnesota homeowners make energy saving upgrades to their homes and generated much-needed work for the residential construction sector. It provided a one-of-a-kind incentive for homeowners to make their homes more energy efficient. "This program is a shining example of how well-designed energy programs can help Minnesota residents while improving the environment, local economy and job opportunities," says Commerce Commissioner Mike Rothman. More than \$24 million in energy-saving improvements have been made, spurred by more than \$7 million in Energy Saver Rebates. Homeowners also estimate leveraging more than \$1 million in total utility rebates and \$3 million in federal tax credits. Many homeowners are reluctant to replace worn-out mechanical systems such as furnaces due to the major financial investment necessary for new systems. However, the Energy Saver Rebate helped many homeowners bridge that financial gap. Mary Tingerthal, Minnesota Housing Commissioner, reports that nearly 2,200 households received an average rebate of \$3,200. Homeowners were eligible to receive up to a 35 percent rebate to a maximum of \$10,000 for energy-saving improvements. To be eligible for the rebate, homeowners first had to secure financing through a Minnesota Housing Fix-up Fund loan. The Fix-up Fund is a home improvement program that offers affordable, fixed-rate loans to eligible homeowners to make livability, accessibility, or energy efficiency improvements.

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From "Rebates Helped More Than 2,000 Homeowners Make Energy Saving Repairs"
HometownSource (04/13/11)

Industry News

The following executive summaries of current news items were written for Strategies after being compiled from various news sources.

more information about the AESP Institute, click [here](#).

Conferences

May 16-19, 2011

AESP's Spring Conference: What's New in Program Marketing & Implementation - (AGENDA)
Atlanta, GA

October 3-6, 2011

AESP's Fall Conference: Customer Behavior and The Smart Grid - (View Prospectus)
Dallas, TX

February 6-10, 2012

AESP's 22nd National Conference & Expo
San Diego, CA

May 15-18, 2012

AESP's Spring Conference
Baltimore, MD



AESP is a member-based association dedicated to improving the delivery and implementation of energy efficiency, energy management and distributed renewable resources. AESP provides professional development programs, a network of energy practitioners, and promotes the transfer of knowledge and experience.

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15215 South 48th
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Energy Improvements

Facility managers will increasingly have to embark upon complicated, resource-intensive, highly-customizable projects in order to meet their energy efficiency goals, since the easier, lower-cost energy efficiency projects have already been completed. These more complex energy efficiency projects can fail for several reasons, particularly if the behavior of maintenance personnel involved in the project is not managed from the beginning, or if maintenance personnel do not appreciate the value of the project and the necessity of maintaining it over the long term. However, facility managers can make several behavioral management changes in order to increase the chances that their complex energy efficiency projects will succeed. For instance, facility managers should implement an appropriate metering and monitoring system, since doing so makes it easier for them to keep track of an energy efficiency project's performance. Such a system can also provide facility managers with warnings in the event problems crop up. In addition, facility managers should get high-level managers involved in energy efficiency projects, since doing so can raise awareness about the project's benefits while simultaneously forming energy initiatives and developing a strategy. When more people in an organization know about energy efficiency projects, the projects gain more credence and increase stakeholder pride. Finally, facility managers should encourage individual pride and value among all of a project's stakeholders, while the organization should try to develop a culture in which good ideas are rewarded and the hierarchy of the organization is trumped.

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From "Energy Improvements"
Today's Facility Manager (03/11) P. 14 Marom, Matan

Danville Utilities Working on Energy Efficiency Program

Danville Utilities' plans for energy efficiency programs are close to becoming a reality, according to Key Accounts Manager Nate Lewis. The Danville, Va., utility has been working on putting together an energy efficiency program to help residential, commercial and industrial customers lower utility bills, as well as bring upgrades to municipal buildings. Lewis says the energy improvements made to city-owned buildings will not only lower the cost to taxpayers for operating expenses, but will serve as examples to businesses looking to reduce their energy costs. Danville Utilities is now an ENERGY STAR® partner, Lewis notes, enabling the utility to use the ENERGY STAR logo and marketing materials, as well as take advantage of free energy efficiency training sessions and webinars. Lewis says the partnership will also help the utility build a rebate program, one of the key steps in its residential energy efficiency program. A survey of residential customers will be completed by mid-May and is expected to help the utility best determine how to set up a rebate program to reward customers who make upgrades to their home that promote energy efficiency. The rebates have not yet been set, but Lewis says the plan is for the rebates to be large enough to encourage residents to make upgrades that will not only earn them a rebate, but bring them a lower power bill. He adds that the goal is to have the rebate program up and running before the real summer heat rolls in, in order to give customers a chance to earn rebates for upgrading their air-conditioning systems. "We want it to be in place in time to make an impact on customers' air conditioning costs," Lewis says. Meanwhile, Danville Utilities is looking for a company that can give comprehensive energy audits of five municipal buildings that will evaluate all heating, cooling, ventilation, and lighting systems, as well as offer recommendations on how to improve them for better energy efficiency and lower power costs.

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From "Danville Utilities Working on Energy Efficiency Program"
Danville Register Bee (VA) (03/24/11) Thibodeau, Denise

Facing the Challenges of Demand Response

Demand response, the decision not to consume energy because of factors such as price, could help balance the power system, integrate variable-output renewable resources into the grid, and increase electric utility efficiency. Although Congress has encouraged demand response as a national policy, some states and utilities have been slow to take it up. In the "2010 Assessment of Demand Response and Advanced Metering" staff report, released in February, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission redefined demand response as "Changes in electric use by demand-side resources from their normal consumption patterns in response to changes in the price of electricity, or to incentive payments designed to induce lower electricity use at times of high wholesale market prices, or when system reliability is jeopardized." Recent years have also seen changes to program classifications,

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which can cause program confusion and make decision-making more difficult. The Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) now offers several interruptible riders that pay customers for providing load curtailments or activating on-site generation for a limited number of times per year. Denise Kuehn, OPPD's manager of demand-side and sustainable management, says that there are operational issues and challenges of implementing demand response initiatives. "When demand response is based on a direct signal, we have better control of the load changes," she said. "We have programs where we request that the customer curtail [energy usage], and the timing fluctuates, which makes it tougher." For more than 25 years, Southern California Edison (SCE) has been designing, developing, and releasing reliability and price-responsive-based demand response retail programs such as direct load control, capacity-based retail products, and dynamic dispatchable pricing. SCE says that demand response programs should offer customer choice and be flexible and adaptable to encourage customer participation.

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From "Facing the Challenges of Demand Response"
Intelligent Utility (04/11) Rowland, Kate

PG&E, SoCal Edison Investing the Most in Demand-Side Management

Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) and Southern California Edison (SCE) top a list of the utilities making the highest investments in demand-side management. The two California utilities invested \$586 million and \$494 million, respectively, in demand-side management (DSM) in 2010, according to rankings compiled by research firm Zpryme. PG&E is one of the first utilities in the United States to deploy smart grid technology. Since 2006, it has installed more than 5.5 million smart meters in residences and commercial properties. Another PG&E program, SmartAC, offers customers \$25 to install a remote sensor that can manage air conditioning. SCE is also investing in smart grid technology. It has installed over 2 million smart meters across southern California and intends to install nearly 3 million more. SCE recently partnered with Teradata Corporation to collect customer usage data, using Itron's Enterprise Edition Meter Data Management System. The utility plans to integrate this with billing and weather data and publish the information to customers later this year. SCE also partnered with Honeywell to automate its Critical Peak Pricing program, which offers commercial and industrial customers incentives to reduce power consumption during the hottest days of the year. Smart grids offer more tools towards improving DSM than any other power sector program or technological advancement in the past 30 years, according to Zpryme, due in part to the flood of data it will provide utilities. "Two key near-term benefits of smart grids for utilities are operational and asset efficiency, along with improved reliability and quality of electrical service," says Allan Schurr of IBM Global Energy and Utilities. "Smart meters will enable their consumers to use energy more efficiently. Finally, smart grids will improve the reliability and lower the cost of incorporating significant amounts of renewable energy supplies."

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From "PG&E, SoCal Edison Investing the Most in Demand-Side Management"
Environmental Leader (03/22/11)

OPOWER's Utility Contracts Show the Power of Simplicity

OPOWER has partnered with Baltimore Gas & Electric and Pacific Gas & Electric for energy reduction initiatives. OPOWER will send utility customers energy reports by mail, email, and text-messaging with data collected from smart meters. According to OPOWER, more customers prefer paper reports over electronic ones, since many users seldom log-in online. Baltimore Gas & Electric will provide the energy saving initiative to more than 1 million customers, with projected savings of up to \$40 million. Pacific Gas & Electric will roll out the program to 5 million customers, though the utility has already received backlash about the cost of the smart meters. The programs exhibit an opportunity for customers to select utilities based on the amount of potential long-term savings yielded from reducing energy. Furthermore, OPOWER's endeavor represents a huge stride for executing an energy reduction plan, while a number of utilities remain only in the pilot stages of their energy efficiency programs.

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From "OPOWER's Utility Contracts Show the Power of Simplicity"
Wall Street Journal (04/07/11) Chernova, Yuliya

Puget Sound Energy's Plans Include More Energy Efficiency, Transmission

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) has included energy efficiency considerations in its 20-year needs projection. As part of the draft, PSE has accounted for peak demands, transmission capacity, and sources for new energy. According to PSE CEO Kimberly Harris, the utility "aims to be nimble and to capitalize on the best resource opportunities and best prices that present themselves in the market." Additionally, Harris says the utility could build more plants if there are no available resources from market participants. In the draft, PSE notes that energy efficient initiatives could provide about 80 percent of the utility's expected power load increase. Conservation programs will also play a critical role as they reduce the need for new resources by more than 25 percent over the next 10 years. PSE notes that top energy concerns remain about managing customers' hourly and seasonal demands.

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From "Puget Sound Energy's Plans Include More Energy Efficiency, Transmission"
Renew Grid (04/11)

Utility Investment in the Home - Fantasy or Future Reality?

Many utilities view home energy management as creating lots of problems and not offering enough payoff, but a market assessment by GTM Research reveals strong underlying fundamentals for investing in the segment. A recent PEPCO trial identified critical peak pricing savings of .64 KW, with remote (utility controlled) thermostats increasing savings to 1.09 KW. Although the savings seem small, 100,000 households would be able to shave around 44 MW -- roughly equivalent to the power output of a \$40 million peaking plant -- enough to justify a \$400 investment on each home. Utilities would face challenges in dynamic pricing, rollout and support, immature standards, and program design, but these issues will generate business opportunities. Dynamic pricing will create opportunities for advisory services on program design, data and analytics, and modeling. As for program design, there is an opportunity for service providers that can drive consumer engagement, participation, and enrollment. Utilities really want demand management, so the emergence of open demand response markets will create opportunities for them to jump in and sell blocks of residential peak reduction, especially through the use of technology tools that provide an impressive return on investment. The successful formats will include services only, technology plus services, self-installing devices, energy management subsystems of smart appliances, and Web sites, with the U.S. market totaling \$750 million by 2015.

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From "Utility Investment in the Home - Fantasy or Future Reality?"
SmartGridNews.com (03/29/11) Geschickter, Chet

As More Commercial Buildings Go Green, a Few Go 'Net-Zero'

A few years ago, John Santarpia, the president and CEO of a credit union, felt he needed to do more to stand out from the competition, so Santarpia and some colleagues found a space in Lakeland, Fla., with an ice cream shop. Santarpia knew that the community of about 100,00 would not want to lose the ice cream shop, so he built his flagship building around the landmark and made the new credit union Florida's first commercial net-zero-energy building. Tim Hoeft, the sustainable designer for Santarpia's building, says financial institutions often are hesitant to try new things. Hoeft says Santarpia was interested in new technology and was attracted by the fact that there were no net-zero commercial buildings in Florida. While it is still loosely defined, net-zero normally means a building produces as much energy as consumed. The Department of Energy's Web site mentions eight net-zero-energy commercial buildings currently operating in the country, most of which are small and in mild-weather environments. Net-zero building has the potential to be a very lucrative industry. Every year, over \$600 billion is spent on new construction and renovation of commercial buildings, according to the Commercial Buildings Consortium. Adding net-zero technology to commercial buildings, which use 40 percent of the country's energy and account for 40 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, would be challenging. President Barack Obama recently announced the Better Building Initiative, which establishes a target to improve commercial building energy efficiency by 20 percent over the next 10 years.

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From "As More Commercial Buildings Go Green, a Few Go 'Net-Zero'"
New York Times (03/23/11) Peters, Joey

Can Wind and Solar Energy Power Traffic Lights?

Energy Plus Roadways, a \$1 million project funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation, is developing a smart grid system using wind and solar power to power street and traffic lights, and to ultimately create more power than is being consumed. Led by a University of Nebraska-Lincoln research team, the project is in its second phase of development. The first phase studied a single 30-foot Bergey XL 1.0 wind turbine used to provide power to a traffic light, with backup power provided by the main grid, and excess power generated sold back to the electric company. The second phase of the project involves developing a control system that intelligently distributes energy generated by wind and solar sources to where it is needed. In 2012, the team will initiate the third phase of the project by creating a micro-grid of eight power generators for eight traffic lights at two intersections. Using effective smart grids to power transportation infrastructure can potentially save \$50 million to run traffic signals alone, decrease downtime due to power outages, and reduce pollution and reliance on fossil fuels.

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From "Can Wind and Solar Energy Power Traffic Lights?"
Government Technology (04/12/11) Wood, Colin

GE Capital Premier's Mobile Application to Help Restaurants Cut Energy Costs

GE Capital is in the process of rolling out WattWise to its franchise restaurant operator customers nationwide. WattWise is a new mobile application that analyzes the energy consumed by the lighting currently installed in an eatery, then estimates the savings operators can achieve if they switch to more energy efficient alternatives. According to the 2011 Chain Restaurant Industry Review, restaurants spend up to five times more on utilities than other commercial businesses. Indeed, lighting accounts for 13 percent of a restaurant's total energy usage. The good news is it's one of the expenses that can be most easily managed. Initial testing with WattWise, for instance, identified at least \$500 in annual cost-saving opportunities per location and sometimes much more. Savings are dependent on such factors as the number and age of the lighting fixtures in use. Chris Armbruster, vice president of franchise development for Taco Bell Corp., remarks, "WattWise is a great way to save money and be environmentally conscious at the same time."

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From "GE Capital Premier's Mobile Application to Help Restaurants Cut Energy Costs"
IEWY News (United Kingdom) (04/05/11)

Featured Articles

Featured Articles - When Marketing Energy Efficiency, Who are We Marketing To? Enhancing Utility Brand Equity Through Effective Customer Experience Management



When Marketing Energy Efficiency, Who are We Marketing To?
By: Karen Healey, PECE

Here's a hint: it ain't us. By virtue of the fact that we already work in the energy efficiency industry, we are typically more interested and engaged in this topic than most people are. Too often, when we put together marketing plans, messaging and tactics, we ask our co-workers, our friends or our family members to offer their critique. Unfortunately, they are not in our target market, so their feedback isn't necessarily all that helpful, and it can even be counterproductive.

Karen Healey

Also, we aren't (or shouldn't be) marketing to stereotypes either. "Californians care about energy efficiency" or "conservatives don't care about the environment" are blanket statements that are not always true. And yet, in our haste to implement marketing programs, it's easy to fall into the trap of using either stereotypes or personal opinions to drive marketing efforts.

But there is a better way. By spending a little time up front learning about your audience, and then building messages and tactics that are meaningful to that particular group, you can greatly increase the effectiveness of your marketing.

At the broadest scale, a potential audience could be all utility rate payers. Some might believe a mass approach is best. But the fact remains that, for most energy efficiency programs, mass marketing is not a cost-effective option. Mass marketing can be great for raising awareness and certainly has a role within a utility's overall marketing efforts, but it rarely makes sense for a specific energy efficiency program. Realistically, not every rate payer is going to be a good match for every program.

So, in order to effectively target customers, we need to understand who is most likely to "buy" or enroll in your program. Are they more likely to live in certain neighborhoods? Are they homeowners? Young singles? And to effectively target them, we want to go beyond just simple demographics and look at how people think, feel and behave. For example: Where do they shop? How likely are they to use new technologies? This info will help to build a cost-effective campaign that specifically targets those most likely to participate in your program. Further, it allows you to develop targeted messages and tactics that will appeal to your targeted audience.

Some examples of how this can work:

- For one of our programs, we are working in a state that is politically conservative and not traditionally thought of as a strong market for energy efficiency. But what we found through our research is that "preservation" and "conservation" are concepts that resonate with a large segment of the population. By framing our programs in these terms, they become much more appealing than a straight "save energy" message.
- We know that moms are often the decision makers when it comes to energy efficiency purchase decisions. But did you know that they are also some of the biggest consumers of mobile apps? According to a 2011 study (by BabyCenter), smartphone use by moms has exploded 64 percent in the last 2 years and 46 percent have taken action after seeing an ad on their smartphone. Clearly, if this is the market you want to reach, mobile needs to be a consideration in your marketing mix.
- Although younger adults often have the greenest attitudes, in many of our programs the people taking action are middle-aged or older. As a result, we have shifted our marketing messaging and tactics to appeal to an older demographic.

The key takeaway? Guard against your assumptions! What we think is true may not be. It is important to look at the data to make sure that our assumptions are correct.

Once we have decided to use data to drive our marketing plans, we need to find which data is most applicable. I am a believer in the idea that some data is better than no data, more data is even better, but there is such a thing as too much data. Think carefully about how you will use the data and how much capacity you have for analysis before getting started. Then, from least expensive to most expensive, here are some ideas for sources of data:

1. **Utility data** – yes, the utilities often have a lot of information on customers, their energy usage, and their participation in past programs. Although sometimes this can be difficult to get at, it can be a powerful source of information.
2. **Free data** – such as census data, information on new home starts and other publically available data, usually from government resources.
3. **Purchased data** – organizations such as Nielsen, Shelton Group, or Experian can be a rich source of particularly consumer-related data.
4. **Simple data collection** – short online surveys, questions on incentive applications or focus groups can be a great way to get targeted data for your specific issue.
5. **Large-scale demographic research studies** – the most time and budget intensive, these studies usually make sense at a utility level where multiple programs can benefit from the data.

Marketing that is based on our intuition or on what appeals to us sometimes works. But marketing based on real data is much more cost-effective and much more likely to drive real results. What data are you using to build your marketing plans?



Crystal Corwin-Smith

Enhancing Utility Brand Equity Through Effective Customer Experience Management

By: Crystal Corwin-Smith, Geavista Group

Cross-functional integration for utility-sponsored energy efficiency initiatives varies; some initiatives are highly integrated with multiple utility departments working collaboratively to achieve energy efficiency goals that align with the corporate vision, while others are characterized by energy efficiency initiatives working independently with little inter-departmental coordination. Although each utility department has different goals, functions, and thought orientations, there is one common purpose that utilities share across departments:

to provide an excellent product and service to customers. Unfortunately, the lack of cross-functional coordination in some utilities often results in a fragmented and inconsistent customer experience that negatively impacts energy efficiency programs, results in lost opportunities for delivering an excellent customer experience, and erodes brand equity.

Delivering a consistent brand message at every point of interaction is one of branding's primary tenets. A brand is defined as everything you see, think, touch, or feel about a product or company. A brand is not the name of the company or a logo or an advertising campaign. It is an emotional and cognitive connection between the customer and the organization or product. The status and relevance of a brand is constantly being negotiated during daily interactions between the company and customer and requires active management. Positive experiences benefit brand equity while negative experiences erode it.

Customers interact with energy efficiency programs through a significant number of communication channels and points along the value chain. Without active management of program portfolios and integration with corporate communications departments during the design and planning phases, brands can quickly become inconsistent and fragmented. For a single program, the points of communication with customers seem simple and manageable. But imagine coordinating messages for over 20 programs with multiple consulting companies and participating contractors and even more communication channels. For example, utilities often allow their energy efficiency programs to develop individual marketing campaigns with program-specific Web sites and URLs. If five energy efficiency programs run radio ads directing customers to five different URLs, but all use the utility's name in the ad, would the customer be confused? Add the utility's corporate advertising and community initiatives into the messaging mix and the brand is further fragmented, causing confusion and negatively impacting brand equity.

There are, however, a few strategies to consider when designing energy efficiency initiatives that will help utilities achieve energy efficiency goals while enhancing brand equity.

Who's Minding the Brand?

The first strategy to ensuring a positive customer experience is one of human capital. Who is minding the brand? Assigning someone to manage the cross-functional brand integration is key. The most logical candidate is the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) and the corporate communications department. Assigning an energy efficiency brand manager to coordinate with the corporate communications department will help facilitate the integration of energy efficiency messages with the utility's brand. Aristotle said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This statement rings true for marketing and communications. Designing, managing, and implementing a coordinated communications campaign and leveraging initiatives across departments will provide utilities with more consistency, exposure, and brand awareness than each department's individual marketing efforts. Corporate communications should be involved in energy efficiency initiatives during the planning phase because energy efficiency programs are essentially new product offerings. This structure enables mutual support for the corporate communications and energy efficiency departments.

Integration Across Communication Channels

The second strategy focuses on integration across communication channels and touch points. Typically, one considers customer service and call centers, consultants, and contractors when implementing customer experience plans. But there are other areas of unrealized potential that may be considered. Most companies conduct community relation initiatives and charitable giving strategies to improve the communities they serve. These initiatives are typically conducted in partnership with community-based organizations and are not considered opportunities for cross-promotion with external initiatives, specifically energy efficiency initiatives. However, significant opportunities exist to strengthen partnerships with these community organizations and to leverage their network for

mutually beneficial goals. A utility can realize the leveraging effects of its relationship with a community organization by tapping into the organization's ready-made network. The community organization becomes a channel to market energy efficiency programs to its customers; its customers receive education and financial benefits; and the utility achieves its energy efficiency goals. This partnership builds the utility's brand equity.

Educational institutions are also key stakeholders for most utilities. It is not uncommon for a single school or district to participate in a utility's energy efficiency program, student education program, and safety initiative. Each of these programs requires a different contact at the school—from a teacher or principal to a facilities manager. There is a great opportunity for the utility to reinforce its commitment to the school and community by demonstrating both the school's efforts and the utility's efforts. A simple letter to the superintendent or school newsletter thanking the district for its participation with an illustration of the financial savings, energy savings, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions can go a long way in enhancing the customers' experience, building relationships, and strengthening brand equity. Implementing this strategy is simply a matter of data mining and coordination among the energy efficiency, corporate communications, and customer relations departments.

Brand Guidelines and Guideline Implementation

The third strategy is to create guidelines, tools, and trainings to ensure that marketing and program materials are on-brand and customer friendly. Internal preparedness initiatives prior to program launch and regular meetings and formal updates throughout the program life will facilitate the flow of information within and across departments. But preparation is not enough. Brands require ongoing management. Therefore, the development and management of mechanisms to maintain materials and keep employees, implementers, and contractors informed of company initiatives is important and will contribute to consistent brand delivery.

Related to brand maintenance is measuring brand awareness and advertising effectiveness. Developing cross-functional strategies to measure customer satisfaction, brand awareness, and marketing effectiveness is critical to gaining an accurate understanding of how customers perceive your brand and their experiences with it. This information will allow utilities to identify areas of concern, tailor messaging, and develop new products or services.

Ultimately, a positive customer experience and increased brand equity boil down to two key elements: 1) actively managing the brand to ensure integrated, coordinated, and consistent messaging at every channel and touch point, and 2) empowering utility employees, consultants, and contractors to be brand champions through adequate training and tools. I hope that this discussion has sparked a few ideas on how energy efficiency departments can contribute to improved customer experiences and contribute to building and maintaining great brands.

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AESP News

Updates and News from AESP

Update from Southeast Chapter

The Southeast AESP Regional Chapter (SEARCH) will be hosting a pre-conference session during AESP's Spring Conference in Atlanta (May 16-19, 2011). The session will take place on Monday, May 16 at 1:30pm. Topics of discussion include:

- Why Regional Chapters Matter
- Vision of SEARCH
- Emerging Energy Efficiency Technologies for the Southeast
- HPWH - Are they the Next Game Changing Technology?

For more information, please contact Carol Sabo at carol.sabo@tetrattech.com.

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Pulse Energy
Schneider Electric
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News Releases and Announcements

[City of Tallahassee Debuts Water Component in Aclara's ENERGYprism Customer-Care Solution](#)

[National Grid and NSTAR Announce Conservation Services Group to Help Deliver Residential Efficiency Programs](#)

[CSG's New Software Makes Energy Program Tracking Easy](#)

[No Limits on Utilities to Achieve and Excel and the Upcoming Aclara Client Conference](#)

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